

REMARKS

This Preliminary Amendment and the accompanying Request for Continued Examination (“RCE”) and Petition for Two Months Extension of Time are being filed in response to the Office Action of December 2, 2006. A check for \$790.00 to cover the RCE filing fee payment and a check for \$450 to cover the Petition fee are included with this Amendment. If necessary, please charge any other fees for entry of this Amendment and RCE to our deposit account no. 03-3415.

Claims 6-7, 12-14 and 18-21 are presented for examination. Of these claims, claims 6-7 and 12-14 have been amended, and claims 18-21 are new. Claims 1-2, 5, 9-11 and 15-17 have been canceled, and claims 3-4 had been previously canceled.

The Examiner has objected to the Title of the Invention as informal. Applicants have amended the Title as suggested by the Examiner, thereby obviating this objection.

The Examiner has objected to claim 1 as informal. Applicants have canceled this claim, thus overcoming the Examiner’s objection.

The Examiner has rejected applicants’ claims 1-2, 6-7, 9-10, 12-13 and 15-16 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Lowy, et al. (US 5,768,151) patent in view of the De Angelis, et al. (US 5,552,824) patent. The Examiner has further rejected applicants’ claims 5, 8, 11, 14 and 17 also under 35 USC § 103(a) based on the latter two patents in view of the Iijima (US 6,286,071) patent. With respect to applicants’ claims, as amended, these rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicants’ independent claims 6 and 12 have been amended to better define applicants’ invention. Amended claim 6 recites an image pickup system comprising:

a time stamp generating unit adapted to generate a time stamp, wherein said time stamp is used to synchronize frame synchronization signals generated in said image pickup apparatus and another image pickup apparatus; a communication unit adapted to transmit said time stamp generated by said time stamp generating unit to said another image pickup apparatus if said image pickup apparatus is set as a master camera, and receive said time stamp sent from said master camera if said image pickup apparatus is not set as said master camera; a frame synchronization signal generating unit adapted to generate a frame synchronization signal using said time stamp generated by said time stamp generating unit and time information if said image pickup apparatus is set as said master camera, and generate a frame synchronization signal using said time stamp received by said communication unit and said time information if said image pickup apparatus is not set as said master camera, wherein said time information is used to manage a communication cycle of said communication unit; and an image data generating unit adapted to generate image data using said frame synchronization signal generated by said frame synchronization signal generating unit.

Amended independent method claim 12 has features similar to amended claim 6.

Each of the independent claims requires an image pickup apparatus or control of such apparatus in which a time stamp used to synchronize frame synchronization signals generated in the image pickup apparatus and another image pickup apparatus is generated or received, a communication unit transmits the time stamp to the another image pickup apparatus if the image pickup apparatus is set as a master camera and receives the time stamp sent from the master camera if the image pickup apparatus is not set as the master camera, a frame synchronizing signal is generated using the time stamp and time information if the image pickup apparatus is set as the master camera, and a frame synchronizing signal is generated

using the time stamp received by the communication unit and the time information if the image pickup apparatus is not set as the master camera, wherein the time information is used to manage a communication cycle of the communication unit, and image data is generated using the frame synchronization signal generated by the frame synchronization signal generating unit. The feature, as now expressed in the claims as amended, of generating a frame synchronization signal in accordance with whether the apparatus is set as a master camera or a slave camera is not taught or suggested by the cited art of record.

More particularly, the Lowy patent discloses a system which includes a master camera and a slave camera and shows a SYNC signal being supplied from the master camera to the slave camera. The patent mentions nothing about the SYNC signal other than stating that “[a] suitable video camera is a Sony DXC-151ACCD Color Video camera, which includes means for synchronizing to other cameras and video equipment.” The Examiner has acknowledged as much in stating that the Lowy patent fails to disclose either the communication unit or frame synchronization unit of applicants’ claims.

The Examiner has argued that the DeAngelis, et al. patent discloses “a network with [a] plurality of cameras of which one is a primary camera . . . and the rest are slave cameras . . . ([F]igures [] 9A-9B, column 21, lines 7-34) . . . [and that] each tunable camera . . . communicates . . . with a . . . timer” to establish synchronous time and thereafter maintain synchronicity. The Examiner further states that “in a system employing such cameras, each frame generated by a camera is marked with an ‘absolute’ time marking.” The text at column 21, lines 1-34 is cited as support.

However, in looking at this paragraph of the DeAngelis, et al. patent and the preceding paragraph, the patent merely states at column 20, lines 62-65, that “the system employs

cameras having tunable timers that are maintained accurate enough to mark each frame with all accurate time before sending it to storage or the central processor.” The patent also mentions that “each tunable camera periodically communicates with a precision timer and after initially establishing synchronous time, periodically re-tunes its clock rate to maintain synchronicity” and “[t]hus in a system employing such cameras, each frame generated by a camera is marked with an ‘absolute’ time marking.” Finally, the patent further mentions that the precision timer can be in a primary camera which communicates with secondary or slave cameras.

Thus, the DeAngelis, et al. patent merely teaches marking the frames of each camera of a plurality of cameras with an absolute time and that this is made possible by using tunable timers in the cameras which are tuned by a precision timer which may be in a primary camera. However, this is not a teaching or suggestion of generating a frame synchronization signal in accordance with whether the apparatus is set as a master camera or a slave camera. Thus, both the Lowy, et al. patent and the DeAngelis, et al. patent fail to teach or suggest such feature.

Applicants’ amended independent claims 6 and 12, and their respective dependent claims, all of which recite such feature thus patentably distinguish over the Lowy, et al. and De Angelis, et al. patents. The Iijima patent fails to add anything to the Lowy, et al. and De Angelis, et al. patents to change this conclusion.

In view of the above, it is submitted that applicants' claims, as amended, patentably distinguish over the cited art of record. Accordingly, reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,



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